

# Florida State Parks Foundation and Bass Pro Shops Participate in Tree Planting at Gold Head Branch State Park

*The goal to plant 100,000 pine seedlings in the first year will be exceeded*

TALLAHASSEE, FL, UNITED STATES, January 25, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Representatives of Bass Pro Shops and the Florida State Parks Foundation participated in a tree planting event at Gold Head Branch State Park on Thursday as part of their statewide Plant a Pine project.

The Foundation announced on Earth Day in April 2020, a goal of planting 100,000 longleaf pine trees by Earth Day 2021 (April 22). In October, Bass Pro Shops and Cabela's Outdoor Fund's generously contributed \$50,000 to the project, enabling the planting of over 50,000 seedlings across ten different State Parks, said Foundation President-Elect Don Philpott.

"We are delighted that Gold Head Branch State Park is one of the first to benefit from this project," he said.



Don Philpott, FSPF President-Elect, planting a longleaf pine seedling

Gold Head Branch State Park, in Keystone Heights, is one of Florida's oldest state parks, developed in the 1930s. It now covers 2,000 acres of rolling sandhills on the North Central Ridge of Florida with one of the few remaining examples of an old growth stand of longleaf pines. A steep head ravine with seepage springs forms Gold Head Branch and bisects the park while marshes, lakes, and scrub provide habitat for a wide variety of wildlife.

The pine seedlings are being planted in coordination with the Florida Park Service in park areas identified for restoration efforts. The longleaf pine is native to the Southeast and once flourished over a range of 90 million acres. Sadly, it is now endangered, covering less than 3 percent of its original range. It has long been prized for commercial use in building houses, ships, and

railroads, and its resin used for making turpentine.

Mature longleaf ecosystems support more than 30 endangered and threatened species, including red-cockaded woodpeckers, gopher tortoises, and indigo snakes. Regular burning to restore natural rhythms enables longleaf pine to become rich, stable ecosystems. Longleaf pines are fire-adapted and dependent on burning, which stabilizes and enriches the soil.



FSPF, Bass Pro and Florida State Park staff at tree planting

“Our Plant a Pine initiative has really resonated with the public,” said Philpott. “People can even dedicate a tree to a loved one. It is a gift that will continue to grow and flourish for many years to come,” he said.

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*Don Philpott*

“The Bass Pro Shops and Cabela’s Outdoor Fund is proud to partner with the Florida State Parks Foundation in restoring the endangered longleaf pine across our beautiful state. We all have a role to play in conserving Florida’s treasured natural resources and, by working together, look forward to seeing these pines grow and enrich our state parks. We send a special thanks to our customers who, by rounding up purchases in our stores, enabled the Outdoor Fund grant to support this project”, said Bass Pro’s Steve Washburn.

Groups interested in supporting hands-on tree planting

projects can contact the Foundation through its website [www.floridastateparksfoundation.org/trees](http://www.floridastateparksfoundation.org/trees).

The Foundation, founded in 1993 as Friends of Florida State Parks and renamed in 2018, is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation whose mission is to support and help sustain the Florida Park Service, its 175 award-winning parks and trails, local Friends groups and more than 20,000 park volunteers.

It does this through programs that preserve and protect state parks, educate visitors about the value of state parks, encourage community engagement and active use of state parks, and advocacy.

The volunteer Board of Directors represents private and public sectors as well as local and statewide interests.

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